

Date: 12 November 2014

Cheap Illegal smokes sold to children

South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) is committed to protecting vulnerable children from the harmful effects of smoking and recently successfully prosecuted a Fairfield retailer who sold children under age illegally imported cigarettes.

SWSLHD Director of Public Health, Stephen Conaty said the dangers of smoking are well known.

"We are sending a loud and clear message to tobacco retailers, particularly those selling to children and taking advantage of the availability of cheap illegally imported cigarettes," Dr Conaty said.

"The illegal cigarettes don't comply with plain packaging laws, meaning people, especially children, are not warned about the dangers of smoking."

"Illicit tobacco is sold considerably cheaper than regulated tobacco so the most disadvantaged communities, who have already high smoking rates, are particularly vulnerable."

"Evidence shows that price is a major influence in encouraging people to quit and preventing young people from taking up smoking."

"Young people are particularly vulnerable to the nicotine dependence and developing smoking habits."

Much effort has gone into educating and reminding retailers of the penalties of selling tobacco products to children and it is worrying that young people are still able to buy cigarettes from some irresponsible shops.

"NSW Health has a compliance monitoring strategy in which volunteer young people attempt to buy cigarettes from local retailers," Dr Conaty said.

"While some retailers might think selling cheap tobacco products is good for business it's not good for young people and the penalties are high,"

Under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2008, it is criminal offence to sell cigarettes to people under the age of 18.

The maximum fine is \$11,000 for individuals for a first offence and \$55,000 for a corporation.